

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Digital Repository

---

Architecture Publications

Architecture

---

2009

## Finding Faces

Daniel Naegele

*Iowa State University*, [naegele@iastate.edu](mailto:naegele@iastate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/arch\\_pubs](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/arch_pubs)



Part of the [Architectural History and Criticism Commons](#)

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/arch\\_pubs/82](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/arch_pubs/82). For information on how to cite this item, please visit <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html>.

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Architecture at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Architecture Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

## Finding Faces

Picasso's 1924 *Mandoline et guitare* is a highly ambiguous painting consciously construed as a hidden head. A covert 'second reading,' the hidden head questions the content obvious in the primary reading of the still life. Picasso's ambiguity encourages viewer awareness of visual perception. A lesson in the nature of representation, the painting also exudes a sense of the uncanny. It is secretly inhabited, conjoining cult value with exhibition value, insisting that 'other worlds' are located within the world we know.

Could such ambiguity be employed in architecture and in the presentation of architecture to suggest other worldliness? Le Corbusier revered Picasso, and understood and appreciated his ambiguity. After Hiroshima rendered architecture's alliance with high technology suspect in 1945, Le Corbusier brought the ambiguity exemplified in Picasso's painting—together with its potent other-worldliness—to Modern Movement architecture.

This article considers the ambiguity of Picasso's 1924 *Mandoline et guitar* and Le Corbusier's later attempt to imbue architecture with its essence.



1



2

Picasso's 1924 *Mandoline et guitar* [1] depicts a wall-papered room with an open window. In front of the window is a table. On the table is a bowl of fruit and two musical instruments. The painting is the last in a series of paintings, a series Picasso began in 1919 with the gouache *Still-Life in Front of a Window at St. Raphaël*.<sup>1</sup> [2] Each painting in the series depicts the same room, and each is a modification of the painting done before it. That is to say, in this series, Picasso does not paint from 'real life;' he paints a painting of a painting. He re-presents representation.

The painting's title, *Mandoline et guitare*, identifies two musical instruments as its subject. It tells us what to see. The mandolin and guitar are obvious, seemingly irrefutable. Obvious, too, are fruit, bowl, table, room and window. All is certain; or so it seems.

But it is exactly this sense of certainty, of our knowing the subject definitely and absolutely, that Picasso undermines. For should we momentarily *not* read the painting's lines and planes and colored patterns as guitar, mandolin, fruit, and table; should we instead suspend our biases and abstract the content of this large colorful canvas, an enormous yet surprisingly precise head appears — a head not hidden, but at the same time not readily perceived. [3]



3

I

The apparition offers a lesson in representation. Yet something else is conveyed as well for there is about the painting a sense of the uncanny. It is duplicitous and *secretly* inhabited; its cult value is accessed only by momentarily suspending its exhibition value. With this duplicitous imaging, Picasso suggests that there exist other worlds not recognized by us — worlds situated exactly within those worlds that we do recognize. Special receivers are necessary to know them. Called to mind are the invisible presences of life in the 1920's: radio waves, x-rays, and infrared light—spectrums of otherness, already sent, waiting to be received. Our visible world is inhabited, yet we 'see' only a small fraction of that which inhabits it and with which we share space.

*Mandoline et guitare* was one — perhaps the best — of several still lifes completed by Picasso in 1924-25 that assume in overall composition the appearance of a comic head inhabiting clearly defined space. Others were featured without titles when published in 1930 in a *Documents* article titled "Hommage à Picasso" [4, 5, 6]. Their 'physiognomic

declarations' — their 'face-likeness' — went undetected by all writers, this despite the Surrealist persuasion of the journal and a review by the renowned critic, Carl Einstein, in which he described Picasso as "*the strongest argument against the mechanical normalization of experiences.*"<sup>2</sup>



4



5



6

Later, in a book titled *Picasso: His Life and Work*, in a section devoted to "The Great Still-Lifes," the Surrealist painter Roland Penrose discussed *Mandoline et guitare*. Penrose noted that in 1924-25 "*the still-life took new proportions in [Picasso's] hands,*"<sup>3</sup> but said nothing of these paintings as physiognomic declarations. He *did* note, however, the image of a classical, plaster, "*bearded head*" in Picasso's 1925 oil, *The Studio, Juan-les-Pins* [7] — perhaps the plaster bust that served as model for the hidden face in *Mandoline et guitare*.



7

## II

Yet, a somewhat surprising and an insightful commentary on the possibility of apparitions in an age dominated by physics and science is found in Amédée Ozenfant's highly influential *L'Art* of 1928. Ozenfant was a renowned painter, the editor of *L'Elan* in 1915-1916, the co-editor of *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1920-1925 with Le Corbusier (and, initially, with Dada poet Paul Dermée<sup>4</sup>). He was Le Corbusier's partner in Purism from 1918 to 1927, a champion and master of ambiguous imagery. Ozenfant underscored the important influence of contemporary science on Surrealists and he supported fully what he understood as their "striving for entirely new ends." Ozenfant recognized in the Surrealists' "impulse towards lyricism" an objective "common to all great artists," one which manifests itself in many ways. "Materialistic minds affirm that [the Surrealist technique] is all rot," he wrote, "but others (myself among them), less convinced by the transcendental virtues of common sense, cannot help having a certain degree of feeling about the matter."<sup>5</sup> He concluded that "simultaneously with categorical art, which imposes its imperious edicts upon us, another form of art can be conceived, passive, accommodating, rubbery, coffee-groundish: not like the other, molding us to its shape, but ready to take on ours. A web of art governed by ourselves, instead of governing us." But to this description of an art decidedly different than Purism, Ozenfant added a warning: "The danger is [...] not every spectator is necessarily creative."<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, 'not every spectator is necessarily creative;' and though *Mandoline et guitare*



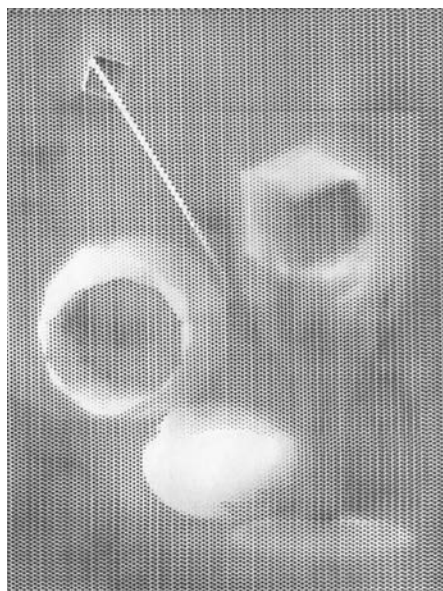
is reproduced in numerous books, is on display at the Guggenheim Museum, and in 1992 was featured in the world-wide traveling exhibition "Picasso and Things," its most remarkable feature — its physiognomy — seems to have gone unnoticed. On the one hand, the painting's ambiguity is subtle; on the other, once discovered, its hidden face seems blatantly obvious, unavoidable. This quality — that which is always there and utterly evident, yet almost always goes unseen — gives the painting tremendous power.

There can be little doubt that Picasso consciously contrived to hide a face in this work. He was sensitive to such apparitions; and if the face were not intended, it would not be in the painting. In her 1964 *Life With Picasso*, Françaises Gilot, Picasso's partner for many years, recounts a story Picasso once told her, a tale that illustrates his close working relationship with the Cubist painter Georges Braque. Gilot recalled Picasso having said:

*I remember one evening I arrived at Braque's studio. He was working on a large oval still life with a package of tobacco, a pipe, and all the usual paraphernalia of Cubism. I looked at it, drew back and said, "My poor friend, this is dreadful. I see a squirrel in your canvas." Braque said, "That's not possible." I said, "Yes, I know, it's a paranoiac vision, but it so happens that I see a squirrel. That canvas is made to be a painting, not an optical illusion. Since people need to see something in it, you want them to see a package of tobacco, a pipe, and the other things you're putting in. But for God's sake get rid of that squirrel." Braque stepped back a few feet and looked carefully and sure enough, he too saw a squirrel, because that kind of paranoiac vision is extremely communicable. Day after day Braque fought that squirrel. He changed the structure, the light, the composition, but the squirrel always came back, because once it was in our minds it was almost impossible to get it out. However different the forms became, the squirrel somehow always managed to return. Finally, after eight or ten days, Braque was able to turn the trick and the canvas again became a package of tobacco, a pipe, a deck of cards, and above all a Cubist painting.<sup>7</sup>*

Long after he had painted *Mandoline et guitare*, Picasso told this story to Gilot—in the late 1930's when 'paranoiac vision' was popular with Surrealists and often manifested in a consciously construed ambiguity that revealed the everyday and ordinary as coded. Examples abound: the 'Rayographs' of Man Ray [8] as well as his 'bull's head torso' frontispiece for the 1937 *Minotaure* 7 [9]; the many physiognomic paintings of René Magritte [10]; the revival of Arcimboldo in *Minotaure* and at the Museum of Modern Art

[11]; the 'metamorphosis' paintings of Paul Klee [12], Brassai's photographs [13]; the many drawings of André Masson [14] and, of course, the far too obvious paintings of Salvador Dalí [15]. The subject was discussed regularly in Surrealist journals by Max Ernst,<sup>8</sup> Georges Limbour,<sup>9</sup> Georges Bataille,<sup>10</sup> and Carl Einstein;<sup>11</sup> and in 1931 Dalí wrote a concise, illustrated exposé on the topic, "*COMMUNICATION: Visage paranoïaque.*"



8



9



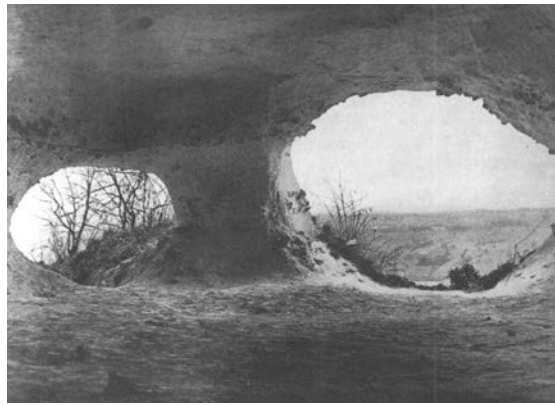
10



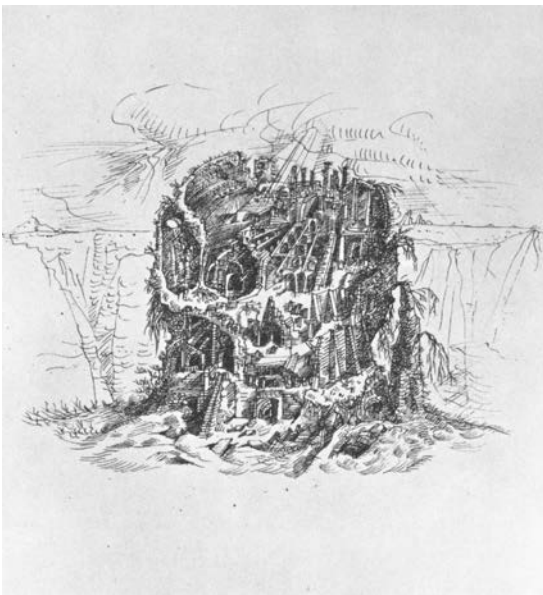
11



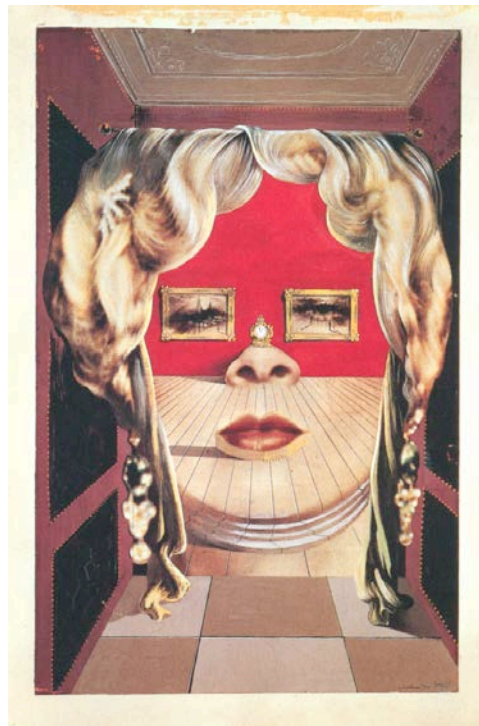
12



13



14



15

In this short article, referring to a photographic image reproduced in a popular press journal [16], Dalí recalled:

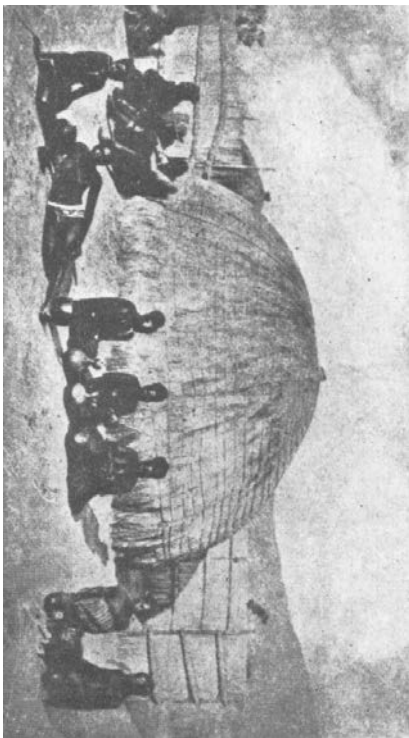
*Following a period of study during which I had been obsessed by a long reflection on Picasso's faces, in particular those of his black period, I was looking for an address in a pile of papers when I was struck by the reproduction of a face I thought was by Picasso, an absolutely unknown one.*



*Suddenly the face disappeared and I realized my illusion (?). The analysis of this paranoid image allowed me to discover, with symbolic interpretation, all the ideas that had preceded the vision.*

*André Breton interpreted that face as belonging to de Sade, which corresponded to a very particular interest of Breton's in de Sade. In the hair of the face Breton saw a powdered wig, while I saw a fragment of unpainted canvas such as often occurs in Picasso's work.<sup>12</sup>*

Dali's essay included three images: the reproduced photographic image oriented horizontally, the same image oriented vertically to reveal a face, and the latter enhanced to convey its likeness to a Picasso portrait [17]. For him, this apparition served as a revelation of the inner psyche of the viewer. Representation, far from being unequivocal, frequently conveys multiple meanings. Ultimately, the viewer's 'vision' determines what is seen. Dali's description suggests a world created as much by the receiver as by the sender.<sup>13</sup>



16



17

### III

"I do not seek, I find," proclaimed Picasso,<sup>14</sup> who, according to Gilot, cultivated in his paintings "oscillations from nothing, to somethings, back to nothings."<sup>15</sup> Much earlier, shortly after Picasso painted *Mandoline et guitare*, the famed critic Waldemar George wrote that Picasso "[...] should be recognized as the first artist who embodies the spirit of his times [because he] has satisfied the secret and invisible relationships that exist at the latent state between the phénomènes de la pensée et de la vie moderne [...]"<sup>16</sup> He described Picasso's paintings as a unique "mixture of mysticism and rationalism."

Mysticism and rationalism: to have mixed these two seemingly antithetical notions in the mid-1920's was, one suspects, an artist's natural inclination. At the time, psychology was a novelty, as was Einstein's relativity. Novel, too, was the 'extra sensory perception' available with binoculars, telescopes, radios, automobiles and aerial vision, and made manifest in the images of x-rays and infrared photography. Often initiated as instruments of science and research, these media challenged the traditional beliefs that formed humanity's foundation for millennia.

A lesson in both perception and the nature of representation, *Mandoline et guitare* exudes a sense of the uncanny, of the slightly terrifying. It is secretly inhabited—accessed only by momentarily suspending painting's capacity for easy depiction. It insists that there exist other worlds not recognized by us—worlds located exactly within those worlds that we do recognize. In consciously construing visual ambiguity, Picasso underscores relativity as inherent in 'seeing.' At the same time, he imbues painting with a temporal dimension. For the content of *Mandoline and guitare* can be read as either musical instruments or face, but not both at once. In the move from one reading to the other, time is made manifest.

Undoubtedly, this 1924 painting presents 'paranoiac vision,' and as such belongs to the domain of Twenties' Surrealist thought. Yet it is also a variation on Cubist themes, another way of accomplishing Cubist goals. "The eye quickly interests the mind in its errors," wrote Gleizes and Metzinger in *Du "Cubisme"* in 1912. A dozen years before Picasso painted *Mandoline et guitare*, they insisted that "Certain forms should remain implicit [...] so that the mind of the spectator may be the chosen place of their concrete birth."<sup>17</sup> And years later, Picasso himself noted that in the early days of Cubism, "We tried to get

*rid of trompe-l'oeil to find a trompe-l'esprit. We didn't any longer want to fool the eye; we wanted to fool the mind.*"<sup>18</sup>

#### IV

Visual ambiguity was fundamental to the Surrealist enterprise, encouraging the artist to understand all of life as comprised of multiple layers. In what way might this manner of 'seeing' other worlds be relevant to life outside the museum? Was the layered-ness of Twentieth Century life a concern for the artist only, not to be suggested to the uninitiated? Could its existence even be revealed outside the museum, itself a frame that insisted on studied viewing of all that was elevated to the status of art?

*"Il faut toujours dire ce que l'on voit,"* wrote the architect, Le Corbusier, as motto for several of his later books, *"surtout il faut toujours, ce qui est plus difficile, voir ce que l'on voit."*<sup>19</sup> Yet, Le Corbusier was unique among those who built 'art' for public habitation. And Le Corbusier was not always Le Corbusier, and he was not always an architect. In 1924, when Picasso painted *Mandoline and guitare*, Le Corbusier was still Charles Eduoard Jeanneret. He had only just begun to design buildings — very small, very minor — in the modern idiom. By reputation he was a Purist painter and, as noted above, co-editor with Amédée Ozenfant of the important and widely read journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Like Ozenfant, Jeanneret appreciated Surrealism. Yet his critical appraisal of the movement was reserved. He understood Surrealism largely in terms of Purism. To him, it was a symbolist variation on the philosophy of art that he and his Purist partner, Amédée Ozenfant, had espoused in both paintings and writings beginning in 1918. Le Corbusier recognized in Surrealist work the *"supremely elegant relationships of [...] metaphors,"* and declared the effects of their art to be *"very clearly dependent on the products of straightforward conscious effort, sustained and logical, cross-checked by the necessary mathematics and geometry, [...] the necessary exactitude for the functioning of mechanisms, etc."*<sup>20</sup> Surrealism, to Le Corbusier, was like Purism both in its subscription to rational strategy and in its attempt to exact from the observer a calculated response. Purism, however, dealt in primary and objective relationships, whereas Surrealism dealt in what Le Corbusier described as *"emotive relationships"*—relationships he believed, nevertheless, to be based *"on objects [...] objects with a function."* The poetics of

Surrealism, he concluded, were rooted in "realism, this realism which is the magnificent fruit of the machine age [...]"<sup>21</sup>

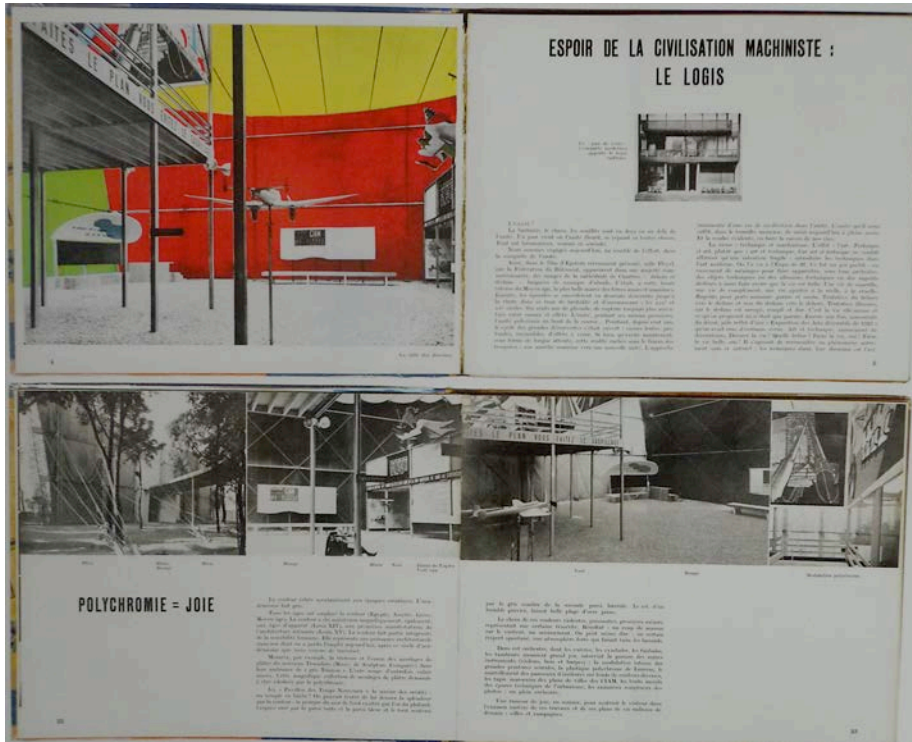
Following this declaration, from 1925 to 1933, Le Corbusier published books and built buildings for which he is justifiably renowned today. During these years, he was known as an architect — perhaps the most influential architect in Europe.

#### IV

In 1933, at the onset of the Great Depression and with little to build, Le Corbusier continued to paint and to write about art, and in both media, he revised the positions he had assumed earlier. Though adamantly opposed to the decorative in 1925, in 1933, at the insistence of the client, he adorned the walls of his recently completed Pavillon Suisse with a photomural. In so doing, he elicited praise from Surrealist leader André Breton.<sup>22</sup> In the same year, having painted privately for nearly a decade, he re-introduced himself as an artist, showing his canvases at the John Becker Gallery in New York City. In 1935, he put both his atelier and his paintings on display—together with paintings and tapestries by Léger, Laurens, and Picasso, and with 'primitives' from the Louis Carré collection — in an exhibition staged in his Porte Molitor apartment. The following year, 1936, he acknowledged the painted mural, noting its capacity to "dynamite" walls and to "open all the doors to the depths of a dream, just there where actual depth did not exist."<sup>23</sup> Later that year, he painted his first mural, 'translated' a painting into a tapestry, and wrote an article for the Surrealist journal *Minotaure*.<sup>24</sup>

In 1937, Picasso's politically charged *Guernica*, a painting the size of a wall and the centerpiece for José Luis Sert's Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition Internationale, achieved immediate acclaim. Celebrated in contemporary art journals as both a formal and rhetorical masterpiece, *Guernica* instantly established a standard for the synthesis of the arts. For the same exposition, Le Corbusier designed the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, a pavilion of colored light containing spatially intriguing murals, both painted and photographic [18]. In each instance, the space of representation — that is, the space elaborated and conveyed mostly in paintings, but also in photographs — was enlarged to size of the wall. Art became architecture, and the space of this art contributed to the new space of architecture—space Le Corbusier would later describe as 'indisible.'





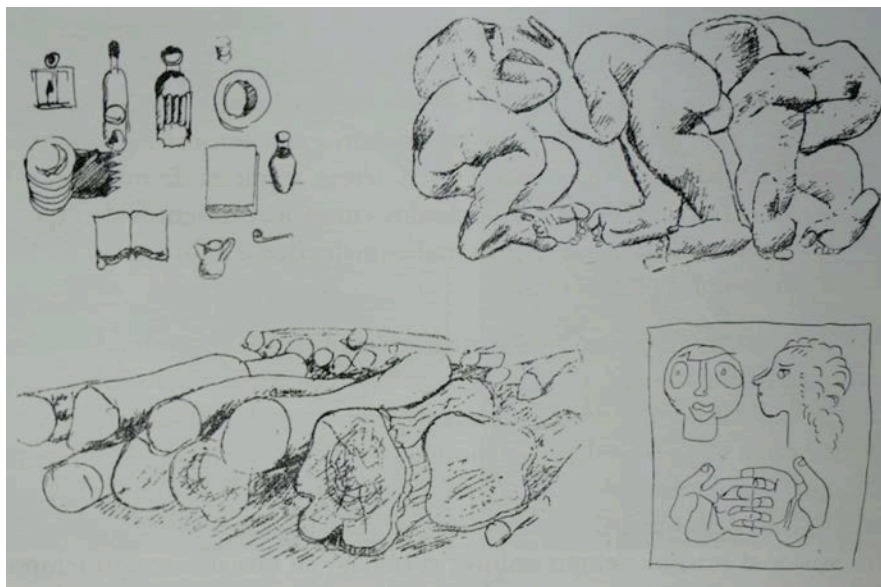
18

When enlarged to the size of architecture, art brought to Modern architecture new spatial and temporal dimensions. Surrealism, in particular, offered a key to those dimensions, yet Surrealist art had not been successful when construed as architecture. In 1937, when Surrealism was at the height of its popularity and long after Purism's cessation, Le Corbusier described Surrealism as "*a noble, elegant, artistic, funereal institution*," contrasting it with Cubism which he described as a "*lucid gesture of constructive spirits seeking the conquest of new times*."<sup>25</sup> Surrealism, he said, appealed to the past, while Cubism had looked to the future. Surrealism was "*a ceremony in memory of so many things that were[:] the evocation of ghosts, desubstantialization, dematerialization*." Surrealists, he insisted, worked in "*symbols*" and "*abbreviations*." Far from regretting this, Le Corbusier hardly approved of the Surrealist efforts. They "*are weeping over the dead*," he declared, exclaiming this to be "*an excellent thing*." Checking his enthusiasm, however, he then noted that Surrealism "*is reaching its end. The new world is waiting for workers!*"<sup>26</sup>

This capacity of art to probe the subjective — in contrast to the 'objectivity' that seemed to underscore much of Modern architecture — was the primary theme of a major retrospective of Le Corbusier's art held in Zurich in 1938, an exhibition

complemented by a book titled *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique*. The eighth and final issue in *L'Architecture Vivante* series devoted to the work of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique* is a forty-plate portfolio of works by Le Corbusier that includes twenty-nine paintings, four original color lithographs, and five images of the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux. It features a forward by Jean Badovici and an introductory essay by Le Corbusier titled "Peinture." In this short essay, without expressly denying his Purist convictions, Le Corbusier reveals his fascination with the literary and the symbolic; that is, with associational values deemed entirely secondary in "Le Purisme."<sup>27</sup> The titles Le Corbusier gave to sections of this treatise—'Existence du sujet,' 'Révélation révéable,' 'Les mots,' 'Le rapport,' 'La poésie parole neuve imprévisible'—suggest writing as metaphor for plastic works.

In "Peinture," Le Corbusier defined a work of art as a "[...] un jeu dont l'auteur a créé la règle," and noted that "*la règle doit pouvoir apparaître à ceux qui cherchent à jouer.*" The game, Le Corbusier insisted, should be comprised of "*signes d'une intelligence suffisante,*" not obscure or private signs, but "*objets expérimentés, révolus, usés, limés par l'habitude, susceptibles d'être reconnus à un simple schéma.*" He illustrated this section with a personal inventory of signs comprised of sketches of logs, of melded human bodies, of folded hands, of curious faces, and of the machined *objets types* of his Purist period: lanterns, plates, bottles, pitchers, pipes, and books both opened and closed [19].<sup>28</sup>



In the key section of this treatise, "L'événement créateur," Le Corbusier expressed beliefs about creativity and about the nature of art, beliefs not unlike those expressed by Surrealists nearly two decades earlier. He described the creative spirit as "*une pensée en effervescence permanente; un esprit scrutateur; un œil qui ne cesse de voir, de mesurer, d'enregistrer.*" No longer did he view painting as exclusively an "*objectification of a 'world'.*" To be sure, a painting was a certifiable, measurable structure — "*la construction de l'œuvre avec tout ce que la plus rigoureuse science (riche, profuse, illimitée) peut apporter de concentration, de concision, d'épure.*" Yet now, too, Le Corbusier understood painting as a lyrical event, a profoundly personal investigation, what he described as "*une enquête illimitée dans le monde apparent et une appréciation constante des réactions de l'objectif sur le subjectif: transposition, transfert des événements extérieurs dans l'intérieur de la conscience.*"<sup>29</sup>

## V

Thirteen of the paintings featured in *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique* are from 1935-1937, presumably manifestations of the beliefs expressed in "Peinture." Of these, the painting most relevant to Surrealism, to Picasso, and to the theme of hidden faces, is surely *Deux musiciennes au violon et à la guitare* from 1937 [20]. A re-working of Le Corbusier's *Trois musiciennes* of a year earlier [21], *Deux musiciennes* marks the culmination of a series of paintings portraying paired figures done by Le Corbusier over a period of four years. It plays dark against light, left against right, solid against void.



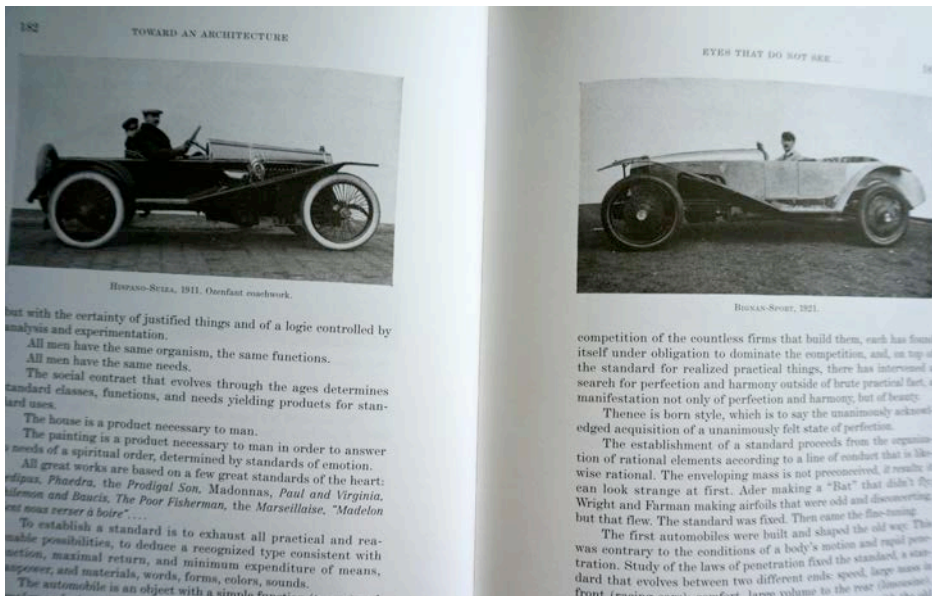
20



21

This pairing is not incidental in Le Corbusier's work. Compositional strategies of a similar sort were employed by Le Corbusier fifteen years earlier in the illustrative text of *Vers une architecture*. On typical opposing pages in that book, the image on the left

page is directly related by composition and content to the image on the right. For example, in a photograph captioned "Hispano Suiza, 1911," a black-bodied car with white sidewall tires is shown being driven by a man with a black coat and white hat. A photograph on the facing page, "Bignan-Sport 1921," features a white-bodied car with black sidewall tires being driven by a man with a white coat and a black hat [22]. The images are the same size and exactly aligned; the cars face one another. While the "Suiza" image is definite and clear, the "Bignan-Sport" image is faded and patchy. One has the impression that the two are mechanically related, that in opening this page, the reader has peeled the patchy image from the clear image. This relationship of opposing images persists in *Vers une architecture*,<sup>30</sup> underscoring the photographic image as a figure 'grounded' in the space of a page — with the page itself a figure grounded in the space of the book. The reader is made aware of the book as a construct, as "another architecture," to be experienced both visually and tactually in space and in time at the turn of the page.<sup>31</sup>



22

One senses that Le Corbusier re-worked *Trois musiciennes* into *Deux musiciennes* imbuing the latter with expansive spatial and temporal dimensions similar to the illustrative text of *Vers une architecture*. He removed from *Trois musiciennes* the middle figure and replaced the Cubist backdrop on its left with seaside motifs. More importantly, however, he construed *Deux musiciennes* as a 'pages of an open book' composition: the shoulders of the figure on the right describing the book's upper edge



and echoed on the left by a sinuous line. Relative to the figures, the book is gigantic. The juxtaposition of scales expands the apparent space of the painting.

The expansion continues when, as if in opening the book, another giant is released. Like Picasso's *Mandoline et guitare*, *Deux musiciennes* is unmistakably physiognomic. Violin and guitar conjoin to become psychedelic eyewear hung on an appropriately sized bottlenose, which hovers in front of a two-legged, toothy-grin table. Thighs become jowls; the two small heads are raised eyebrows; and this enormous face--simply due to its size and willingness to rest on the picture's bottom edge--defines a new foreground. With face as foreground, the apparent depth of the canvas again expands.

When found, the hidden face evokes a sense of the marvelous, imbuing the painting with a significance that extends beyond that of an ordinary still life while rendering the work spatially expansive. "*Evènements extérieurs*" are transferred to "*l'intérieur de la conscience*." An "*enquête illimitée dans le monde apparent*" is initiated. An "*appréciation constante des réactions de l'objectif sur le subjectif*" is evident. A "*pensée en effervescence permanente*," a "*siège de l'infini*": *Deux musiciennes* is the plastic manifestation of convictions expressed by Le Corbusier in "*Peinture*."

## VI

That Le Corbusier would construe a hidden face to make manifest his convictions is hardly surprising. It was a conservative move, conservative not only because his revered Picasso had done it more boldly a dozen years earlier, or because it could be viewed as a variation on a Cubist theme and thus as a "*lucid gesture of constructive spirits seeking the conquest of new times*," but also because, like *Mandoline et guitare*, it neither violated earlier established principles nor contradicted a firm belief in the 'machine civilization.' Rather, the apparition is benign, the product of "*straightforward, conscious effort, sustained and logical structure*" — its effect ordered and calculated. We, the viewers, have not created this face; it was left there for us to find. In the words of Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, we have been "*placed in the state desired by the creator*." Our thoughts have been predicted, our discovery prescribed. Yet in the act of discovery itself, one experiences the reading of a painting.

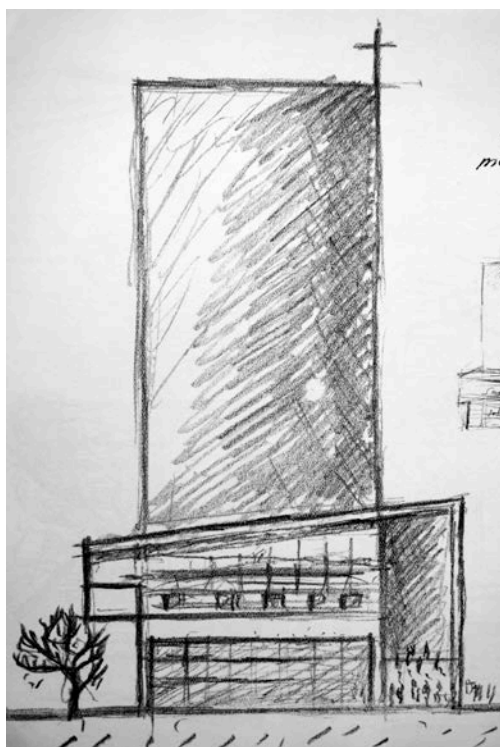
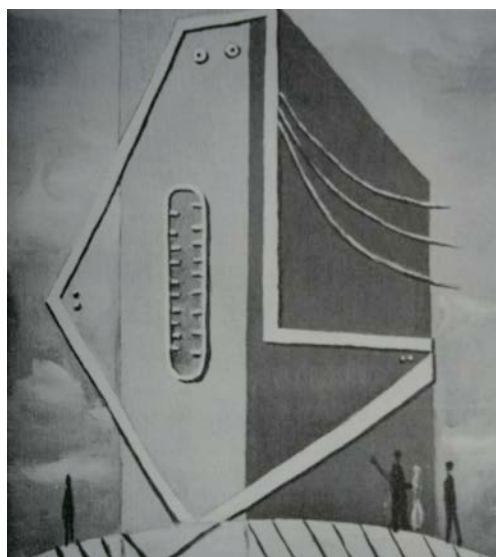
In painting *Deux musiciennes* and recording in "Peinture" the theory that motivated it, Le Corbusier cultivated a belief in the curious, the inexplicable, the ineffable. He made manifest the subjective dimension of reality. Combined, the art of *Œuvre Plastique* and the essay "Peinture" constitute a theory of art significantly different than that to which Le Corbusier subscribed a decade earlier.

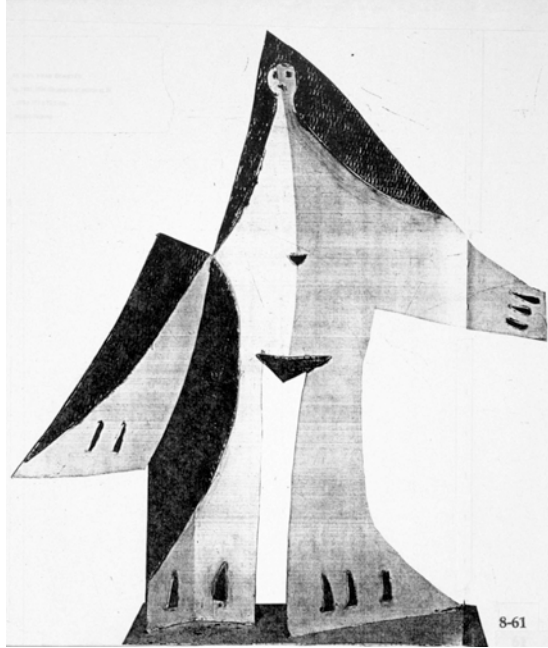
Le Corbusier's 'war experience' added to this new way of thinking about art and architecture. During the war, as he himself noted, "*stones and pieces of wood led [him] on involuntarily to draw beings who became a species of monster or god*,"<sup>32</sup> After the war, beginning in 1946 with the publication of '*L'espace indicible*'<sup>33</sup> and later in 1955 with *Le Poème de l'Angle Droit*<sup>34</sup> and the completion of the chapel at Ronchamp, what once might have been deemed mere curiosity emerges as a new theory of architecture. Without refuting the old theory — articulated most clearly in the verbal text of his 1923 *Vers une architecture* — in "*L'espace indicible*," *Le Poème de l'Angle Droit*, and most evidently in the Chapel at Ronchamp, Le Corbusier proposed a new one, perhaps more to complement than to contradict his earlier proclamations.

In 1945 the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki placed humanity at the brink of extinction, making high technology a questionable ally for modern architecture. In the 1920's, technology was a manifestation of progress, of modernity, of the capacity of the Industrial Revolution to benefit all of mankind. But the tremendous destruction of the war suggested technology an unstable platform on which to base a theory of architecture. Technology preferred the objective to the subjective. Le Corbusier's architecture — as articulated at Ronchamp, the creation of which brought accusations of treason from architects just beginning to be 'modern' — was in sympathy with a worldview that held technology in suspicion. This new architecture sought to align building with life and with a significance that might transcend the contemporary and extend beyond the 'command' of mechanization. As the world began to re-build itself, an interest in biology replaced that in physics. Finding a face for architecture must have seemed a necessity to the aging architect, the most influential architect in the Western World.

## VI

In 1929, Picasso painted *Monument, Woman's Head* [23]. That same year, Le Corbusier completed his first church design, the *eglise Tremblay* [24]. Remarkably similar in shape, proportion, and materiality to Picasso's painting, the church design was highly objective and without trace of anthropomorphic manifestation.<sup>35</sup> After Surrealism and after the War, as art grew to the size of architecture and architecture sometimes became art, Le Corbusier seemed to anticipate his revered Picasso. He built into the east façade of his chapel at Ronchamp an uncanny presence: a physiognomic declaration every bit as subtle, fleeting, and elusive as the pirate head of *Mandolin et guitare* [25]. Wholly phenomenal, it appears in representation sometimes during the day, but more often at night — when light from below creates a triangular brow that insists the lozenge-like window is an eye, its statue of Our Lady a pupil, the curvaceous roof a full lock of hair, and the outdoor pulpit a less-than-distinguished nose. Nearly a decade later, Picasso enlarged his life-size *Femme aux bras écartés* of 1961 [26] to a six-meter-high concrete giant with face and coloration similar to that found at Ronchamp. The real world would be populated with colossals of a surreal size.<sup>36</sup>





Beginning in the 1960's, artists usurped the domain of the natural world in which architecture resides. With rare exception, architects turned elsewhere, to the objectivity of technology in a soon-to-be-global world of digitalization. Though often hidden, anthropomorphic art and architecture remain — a reminder of a time when technology was viewed with suspicion, and when the obviousness of objectivity found contrast in the subtlety of the subjective.

---

## NOTES

References below to FLC (Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris) documents are to the boxes and numbers as categorized by that archive in 1993. The Fondation has since digitized much of its material and in so doing has changed nearly all of the reference numbers. No means of cross-referencing was established.

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Silver has noted that this small work was painted in Paris in the fall as a "recollection of the previous summer on the Riviera" and was inspired "by the series of *guéridon* pictures that Braque showed at Rosenberg's L'Effort Moderne the previous March." See Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p351.

Roland Penrose cited a similar, small gouache, and noted that these St. Raphaël works were variations on a theme begun earlier in Barcelona and that Picasso "continued to elaborate these cubist still-lives after his return to the rue la Boétie." See Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p218.



---

For a color reproduction of this (or a similar) gouache, see Frank Elgar and Robert Maillard, *Picasso*, trans. Francis Scarfe (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1972), fig. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Einstein, "Hommage à Picasso," *Documents* 3 (1930), p155

<sup>3</sup> Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (NY: Schocken Books, 1962), p226.

<sup>4</sup> A French poet born in Liège in 1888, Paul Dermée's given name was Camille Janssen. A thorough account of Dermée and his involvement with *L'Esprit Nouveau* is found in Jean-Marie Roulin, "Paul Dermée und L'Esprit Nouveau," in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier und die Industrie 1920-1925* (Zürich: Museum für Gestaltung, 1987), pp152-159.

<sup>5</sup>[Amédée] Ozenfant, trans. by John Rodker, *Foundations of Modern Art* (NY: Dover, 1952), pp131-132. This book was first published in French in 1928 as *L'Art*. The 1952 Dover edition cited above is, according to Dover, "an enlarged version of the English translation originally published by John Rodker in 1931. This edition contains a new Preface and three additional chapters by the author." The 1952 Dover edition refers to the author only as 'Ozenfant', making no mention of his first name, 'Amédée.'

<sup>6</sup>Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, p130.

<sup>7</sup> Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (New York: Mc-Graw-Hill Book Co., 1964), pp76-77.

<sup>8</sup>See, for instance, Max Ernst's "Du danger qui existe pour un gouvernement d'ignorer les enseignements du surréalisme" in *Documents* 34 .I (June 1934): pp64-65 in which he discussed the face of Lenin hidden in *la propagande communiste camouflée*, and various obscene images hidden in renowned works of art — in the work of Leonardo, for instance, and specifically in a crucifixion scene by the Elder Lucas Cranach which, when viewed from the side, takes on obscene overtones.

In the same publication, see also Ernst's "Beyond Painting," p97. Here Ernst told of an incident in which, alone at an inn on the coast, he was

*struck by the obsession exerted upon my excited gaze by the floor — its grain accented by a thousand scrubbing. I then decided to explore the symbolism of this obsession and, to assist my contemplative and hallucinatory faculties, I took a series of drawings from the floorboards by covering them at random with sheets of paper which I rubbed with a soft pencil. When gazing attentively at these drawings, I was surprised at the sudden intensification of my visionary faculties and at the hallucinatory succession of contradictory images being superimposed on each other with the persistence and rapidity of amorous memories[...] I began to explore indiscriminately, by the same methods, all kinds of material — whatever happened to be within my visual range — leaves and their veins, the unraveled edges of a piece of sackcloth [...] Then my eyes perceived human heads, various animals, a battle ending in a kiss.*

(my translation from the French)

<sup>9</sup>Georges Limbour, "Chronique: Paul Klee," *Documents* 1 (June 1929), pp53-54.

<sup>10</sup>Georges Bataille, "Le Langage des fleurs," *Documents* 1 (June 1929), pp160-168.

<sup>11</sup>Carl Einstein, "Pablo Picasso, quelques tableaux de 1928," *Documents* 1 (June 1929): pp35-47.

<sup>12</sup>Salvador Dali, "COMMUNICATION: Visage paranoïaque," *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, Vol. XII, no. 3, (Paris,1931), translation as it appears on p287 of Massimo Cacciari, "Animarum Venator," in *The Arcimboldo Effect : Transformations of the Face from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Milan: Bompiani, 1987), pp275-297.

---

<sup>13</sup>With this found image as a starting point, Dalí went on to explore metamorphosis in his paintings in the 1930's as was evident in "The Endless Enigma" exhibition of his work in New York's Julien Levy Gallery in 1939. The 'hidden face' was a favorite theme of Dalí, though he was never very subtle in his representations. This lack of subtlety, combined with an eagerness to diagram out his own work, detailing for the viewer all of his cleverness, eroded a prime component of metamorphosis: the process of discovery — even though Dalí, himself, had noted appreciatively, the potential for an image 'to disappear.' Unlike photography, gallery painting of the sort Dalí reveled in was recognized as purely fictive and illusory.

<sup>14</sup>Pablo Picasso, "Statements to Marius de Zayas" (1923), as quoted and translated in Edward F. Fry, *Cubism* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p165, initially published in *The Arts* as "Picasso Speaks" (NY: May 1923), pp315-326.

<sup>15</sup>Françoise Gilot, "From Refuse to Riddle," *Art and Antiques* (Summer, 1992), p59.

<sup>16</sup>In French, a 'mélange de mysticisme et de rationalisme.' FLC, Box T2-9, #47 : Waldemar George, "Picasso," p8. This article was intended for publication in *L'Esprit Nouveau* 29 (ca. 1925), a special issue to be dedicated solely to the work of Picasso. Unfortunately, the journal ceased publication before #29 came to print. Translation from the French is mine. I chose not to translate George's "phénomènes de la pensée et de la vie moderne et qu'il a réussi à les agréger [...]" as this phrasing closely resonates with Le Corbusier's late 30's description of the objective of his own painting.

<sup>17</sup>Gleizes and Metzinger, *Du "Cubisme "* (Paris: Eugène Figuière Éditeurs, 1912), as translated in Fry, *Cubism*, p107.

<sup>18</sup>As quoted in Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, p77.

<sup>19</sup> An English translation might be: "One must always say what one sees, but above all, and more difficult, one must always see what one sees." See especially the books 'by' Le Corbusier edited by Jean Petit in the late Fifties and the Sixties.

<sup>20</sup>Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, p187.

<sup>21</sup>Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, trans. James I. Dunnet (Cambridge Massachussets: MIT Press, 1987), p188. This book was first published under the title *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Editions G. Crès, 1925) as a compilation of articles previously published in *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

<sup>22</sup> See my "Le Corbusier and the Space of Photography: Photo-murals, Pavilions, and Multi-media Spectacles," *History of Photography*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp127-138.

<sup>23</sup>Le Corbusier, "Architecture and the Arts," trans. Maria Jolas, *Daedalus* special issue (Winter, 1960): pp49-50. Originally from a discussion at La Maison de la Culture, Paris, 1936. First published in *Transition* 25 (Fall, 1936): pp141-145, later in *Le Corbusier: Architect, Painter, Writer* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), pp141-145.

<sup>24</sup>Le Corbusier, "Louis Sutter, l'inconnu de la soixantaine," *Minotaure* 9 (1936): pp62-65. See my "Drawing-Over: une vie decanté. Le Corbusier y Louis Soutter," *Ra 6* (*Revista De Arquitectura*) (June, 2004) pp 43-54 & pp93-96 (Spanish & English).

<sup>25</sup>Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White, A Journey to the Country of Timid People*, trans. Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), p147. Originally published as *Quand les Cathédrales étaient Blanches; Voyage au pays des timides* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1937).

---

<sup>26</sup>Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, pp147-148.

<sup>27</sup>Ch-E. Jeanneret and A. Ozenfant, "Le Purisme." For an English translation of this important article, see Robert Herbert, editor, *Modern Artists on Art* (NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1964).

<sup>28</sup>Again, all of this follows beliefs set out in "Le Purisme" in which Le Corbusier and Ozenfant eschewed "an art of the initiated, an art requiring knowledge of a key, an art of symbols" and described the representational 'subjects' of their still-lives as "theme-objects endowed with elementary properties rich in subjective trigger actions."

<sup>29</sup>Le Corbusier, "Peinture," unpagéd. In English: "an unlimited inquiry in the apparent world and a constant appreciation of the action of the objective on the subjective...the transfer of exterior events into the interior of consciousness."

<sup>30</sup>A similar display is evident in the photographs in *Vers une architecture* captioned "The Apses of St. Peter's" [Dover, pp164-165; Arthaud, pp132-133] where again two photographs, nearly identical but reversed, one light and clear, the other dark and patchy are found aligned and on opposing pages. The 'content' of these two photographs is redundant; one is so dark that it can barely be read at all. Yet presumably there is some inherent message in this seriality, this pairing together of distinct and faded image. "The Propylea" and "The Erechtheum" [Dover, pp206-207; Arthaud, pp168-69] are another example. The strategy is evident as well within the confines of a single symmetrically-composed image such as "The Parthenon" where the dark patchy columns and channel on the left are the negative image of the white patchy columns and step on the right.

<sup>31</sup>Le Corbusier frequently used the book as a spatial-temporal metaphor. The phrase, "A page is turned...", appears time and again in his writings. In "Tout arrive enfin à le mer," for instance, he wrote, "*La page tourne, va être tournée bientôt et d'autres points de vue sont à prendre en consideration.*" [FLC Box A3-2, #661+] On occasion he elaborated the metaphor by noting the instant in which one can see the past (page) together with the future (page) and only the very edge of the (present) page that is being turned.

<sup>33</sup>Le Corbusier, "L'espace indicible," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, special number (January, 1946): pp9-10. Re-published in Le Corbusier, *Modulor II*. Published in English in Le Corbusier, *New World of Space* and later in Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), p66.

<sup>34</sup>Le Corbusier, *Le Poème de l'Angle Droit* (Paris: Editions Verve, 1955)

<sup>35</sup>In *Picasso: His Life and Work*, pp240-241, Penrose groups the *Monument*, *Woman's Head* painting together with Picasso's monument for Appolinaire and his later monumental sculpture for La Croisette, the sea-front at Cannes. "I have to paint them," Picasso told Kahnweiler in reference to such colossals, "because nobody's ready to commission one from me." This changed in the late fifties.

Le Corbusier's project for a chapel for Madame de Monzie at Tremblay--a kind of vertical Maison Citrohan done in the same year as the Mundaneum and the Villa Savoye--in its severity clearly anticipates the chapel at La Tourette.

<sup>36</sup>For a listing of these outdoor sculptures, see Werner Spies, *Picasso Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), especially no.'s 594-597--four versions of the *Woman with Outstretched Arms* from 1961--and no. 654, the 82 ft. high 1966 sculpture at Barcarès. For a detailed description and history of the concrete sculpture, see Sally Fairweather, *Picasso's Concrete Sculptures* (NY: Hudson Hills Press, 1982), especially p48 on the *Femme Debout*, the 20 ft. high concrete version of *Femme aux bras écartés* built in 1962 by Carl Nesjar at Le Prieure de Saint-Hilaire, Chalo-Saint-Mars, France. For a visual account of 'architecture-sized' Picasso sculpture, see the catalogue *Picasso in Chicago* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1968).

---

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 *Mandoline et guitare*, Pablo Picasso, 1924, from Carsten-Peter Warnke and Ingo F. Walter, *Picasso* (Köln: Taschen, 1997) p300, bottom.
- 2 *Still-Life with a Guitar on a Table in Front of an Open Window and Still-Life in Front of a Window at St. Raphaël*, Pablo Picasso, 1919, from *Picasso* (above), p261.
- 3 *Mandoline et guitare* modified to 'extract' hidden image, see '1' above.
- 4 From André Schaeffer, "L'Homme à la clarinette," *Documents 3* (themed "Hommage à Picasso"), 1930, p164, top.
- 5 From André Schaeffer, "L'Homme à la clarinette," *Documents 3* (themed "Hommage à Picasso"), 1930, p164, bottom.
- 6 From Marcel Jouhandeau, "Dieu-le-Pere," *Documents 3* (themed "Hommage à Picasso"), 1930, p167.
- 7 *The Studio, Juan-les-Pins*, Pablo Picasso, 1925 (from Taschen's *Picasso*, above) p315, bottom.
- 8 Man Ray, 'Rayograph,' from *Photographs by Man Ray, 105 Works, 1920-1924* (NY: Dover, 1979) p85.
- 9 Man Ray, 'Bull's Head Torso' photograph frontispiece to *Minotaure 7* (1935) [reproduced in both Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, *L'Amour Fou* (London: Cross River Press, Ltd., 1985) pp16-17 (opposing pages) and in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, p82.
- 10 René Magritte, *L'Eschelle du jeu*, 1939. The 'original' version of this painting was reproduced in 'Interventions Surréaliste,' *Documents*, 1934; this image is from Abraham Marie Hammacher, *Magritte* (first edition), p123.
- 11 Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Earth*, c1570, as reproduced in *The Arcimboldo Effect* (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fabri, 1987), p92.
- 12 Paul Klee, *Southern Gardens*, 1934, as reproduced in Will Grohmann, *Paul Klee* (NY: Abrams, 1955) p139.
- 13 Brassäi, *Troglodyte*, 1936, photograph frontispiece to *Minotaure 8*, reproduced in Krauss/Livingston, *L'Amour Fou* (see credit #9, above), p188.
- 14 André Masson, drawing, *City of the Skull*, 1939, as reproduced in William Rubin and Carolyn Lancher, *André Masson* (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), p33, top.
- 15 Salvador Dalí, *The Face of Mae West*, 1934-5, reproduced in *The Arcimboldo Effect* (see note #11 above), p297.
- 16 Salvador Dalí, 'a reproduction of a face', (single image only) from his 1931 "COMMUNICATION: *Visage paranoïaque*," originally published in *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, Vol. XII, no. 3 (Paris, 1931), as reproduced in *The Arcimboldo Effect* (see note #11 above), p286.
- 17 Salvador Dalí, 'all three images (the entire page) in his 1931 "COMMUNICATION: *Visage paranoïaque*," as reproduced in *The Arcimboldo Effect* (see note #11 above), p286.
- 18 Photograph of interior of Le Corbusier's 1937 Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, plate 33, *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique*

- 
- 19 Le Corbusier's personal inventory of signs: sketches of logs, of melded human bodies, of folded hands, of curious faces, and of the machined *objets types* of his Purist period, from "Peinture," *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique*, pp22-23.
- 20 *Deux musiciennes au violon et à la guitare*, 1937, from *Le Corbusier, Œuvre Plastique*, plate 28
- 21 *Trois musiciennes*, Le Corbusier, 1936 from *Le Corbusier* (Madrid, 1987)
- 22 photographs "Hispano Suiza, 1911" and "Bignan-Sport 1921" from *Vers une architecture*, pp108-109 (Paris: Artaud)
- 23 *Monument, Woman's Head*, Picasso, 1929, from *Picasso in Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute, 1968) p9.
- 24 Le Corbusier's first church design, the *église Tremblay*, from Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier, lui-même* (Geneva: Forces Vives, 1970) p72.
- 25 Nightscene with bonfire at the east facade of the chapel at Ronchamp, from *Perspecta 18, The Yale Architectural Journal* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982) p65.
- 26 *Femme aux bras écartés*, Picasso, 1961, Carsten-Peter Warncke and Ingo F. Walther, *Picasso* (Köln: Taschen, 1997), p567, bottom